

Utah State Capitol Building to Reopen

By Burgundy Flammer - 3 Dec 2007
BYU NewsNet

Utahns eager to attend the re-dedication of the renovated Capitol building next month, find out today if they get to be there when President Gordon B. Hinckley does the honors. The Capitol Preservation Board will draw names this afternoon to decide which citizens from around the state will join dignitaries at the Jan. 4, 2008, ceremony.

It's too late to get in on the action - postcards entries for the Once In A Lifetime Opportunity were due days ago - but residents can still make plans to tour the statehouse during the public open house Jan. 5-12.

The building has been closed for extensive restoration and seismic upgrade for the last three and a half years.

This historical building is the home of the Utah State Legislature, the offices for the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, treasurer and the auditor.

The building is 404 feet long, 240 feet wide and is capped by a dome that reaches 226 feet. The granite used within the Capitol was quarried in Little Cottonwood Canyon. The dome is covered in copper mined in Utah.

Construction on the Capitol first began on Dec. 26, 1912, with the dedication on Oct. 9, 1916. The cost of the original construction was \$2.7 million, a small amount compared to the \$212 million it cost for the renovation. In order to preserve this historical building, many changes and upgrades have been made.

According to David Hart, the executive director of the Capitol Preservation Board, the building was put on base isolation and restored to its original design.

"The base isolation is designed to preserve the building during an earthquake," Hart said. "The restoration is so the people of Utah can enjoy the historical aspect of this building."

The Utah State Capitol Building was considered a "tragedy in the waiting" because the building lies within several hundred feet of the active Wasatch Fault, which is capable of producing a magnitude 7.3 earthquake.

Years of investigation and study led to the current renovation solution. Thousands of cubic yards of concrete along with several million pounds of reinforcement bars have been added to the foundation of the structure as part of the base isolation scheme.

State of the art mechanical, electrical, Internet and telecommunication systems have also been added to the building. New artwork in the rotunda will be displayed and more than 500 cherry trees have been planted on the Memorial Walkway.

The 2008 session of the Utah State Legislature will convene in the newly remodeled Capitol building this January.

A small army of volunteers will direct the anticipated visitors and aid the Capitol docents during the weeklong open house, Jan. 5-12, 2008.

"We are looking for at least 2,300 volunteers," said Mike David, co-chair of the State Capitol Volunteer Task Force. "Elementary schools across the state are planning field trips to the Capitol and high school choirs will be performing every hour. We expect a big turnout."

Volunteers will be able to attend a special dress rehearsal of the rededication ceremony on the evening of Jan. 3, which will include the full performances scheduled for dignitaries on Jan. 4. Following this rehearsal, volunteers are expected to attend a brief training to prepare for the open house week.

Volunteer registration can be completed online, at www.regonline.com/capitol-volunteers. For more information contact Mike David at 801-538-8697 or email Rick Pehrson at rphrson@utah.gov.